

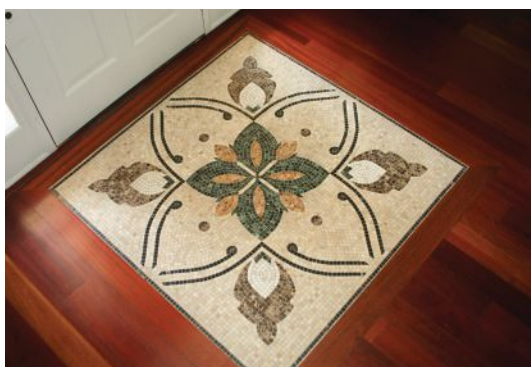


TILE: *The Perfect Winter Project*

By Lesa Knollenberg | Photos courtesy of Bella Tile and Stone

LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT WINTER PROJECT? TRY TILE.

Ceramic tiles are not just for bathrooms and backsplashes anymore. Homeowners are viewing their homes as a palette and using tile as a stroke of color. Ceramic tiles are popping up in unexpected places, setting off built-in shelves in a shower or framing the edges of an unadorned mirror. Tile as artwork has become an exciting trend, one that allows designers and homeowners to be innovative. A tiling project is an exciting way to add depth and artistry to your home without undertaking a new construction project.



According to Dianne Fasano, owner of Bella Tile and Stone in Lake Geneva, tile trends have shifted over the past few years from a more ornate, European style to simpler, geometric shapes. We asked Fasano for her expert advice on the latest tile trends.

So what's hot in ceramic tiling?

SCALE

Bigger is trendier. It's easy to create artistic drama with larger tile and smaller grout lines. Creating a spectacular entryway is easily accomplished by using large, bold tiles with contrasting colors. Tile designers are looking past the traditional 12" x 12" tile to tiles that are 24" x 24" and beyond. These super-sized

tiles present an expansive look that makes any room look larger.

At the other end of the scale, small, intricate mosaic tiles are a great tool for expressing artistry. Tiles that range from 3" x 3" to a tiny ½" x ½" can be used to create a monogram or other unique look. Mixing large and small tiles showcases whimsical interior design.

SHAPE

In tiling, it's no longer hip to be square; rectangles have come into fashion. Rhombuses and hexagons, too. An arrangement of long, thin tiles becomes a fashionable herringbone mosaic. A series of slender rectangular tiles can create intricate crosses. Thicker rectangles, known as 'subway tiles' for their prevalence in the New York City subway, are making a big comeback as people restore their homes and covet a retro look.

PATTERNS

Using the clean lines of these shapes, it's easy to evoke a vintage or contemporary look by combining tiles to create a complex pattern as in the traditional honeycomb design or the classic chevron-angle. Subway tiles can be stacked in various heights to create innovative installation patterns as well.

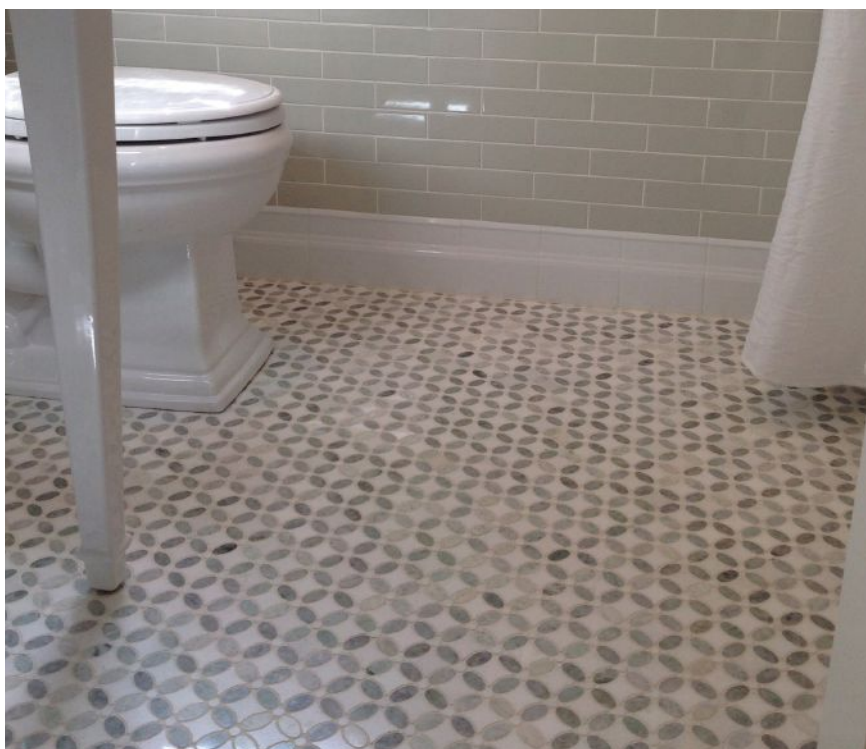
TEXTURES

Texture that takes advantage of the three-dimensional nature of tile is currently emerging as a trend, leading to grass cloth covering and animal skin tiles, as well as tiles that mimic natural stone with rough texture. Mesh-backed pebble tile is increasingly used for home accents. Designers are creating a sense of movement with dimension in living rooms, where patterns and texture combine to seemingly roll or weave along a previously unremarkable wall.

COLOR

The latest trends in color highlight strong contrasts and bright hues. Small bright tiling projects accessorize a room, whereas metallic is the new black, creating a monochromatic, contemporary feel.

Alternatively, tiles that have the look of worn, reclaimed wood are also fashionable. Neutrals are still popular, but modernized with the addition of tiled stripes, solids and patterns in the same palette.





TECHNOLOGY

Even that famous Space Age family the Jetsons couldn't have imagined photoluminescent tiles with a futuristic glow. These tiles use solar energy or electric light to create a glow-in-the-dark appearance. For the bathroom, glow-in-the-dark tiles can be used inside the tub, shower or on the walls. They can also be used in entryways or down dark hallways to help during power disturbances.

Touch-sensitive ceramic tiles (featured on a recent episode of "Extreme Makeover Home Edition") respond to temperature, and can be used on walls, ceilings, furniture, and bathroom surfaces. They change appearance upon touch or with heat from the sink or shower. Children are especially fond of these funky tiles, as they can produce handprints or designs, and tiles change in appearance from day to day.

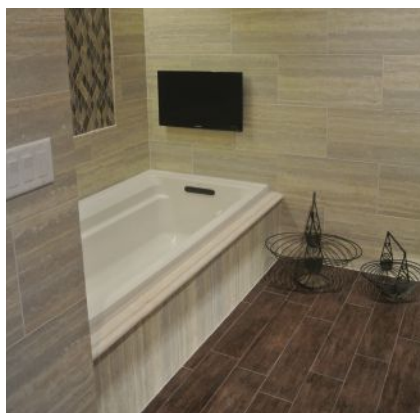
Because ceramic tiles are by cold by nature, homeowners often reject them as a flooring option. However, now it's possible to incorporate a radiant heating system under the tile to create warmth. This technology is



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being applied to the tile themselves, as well. Tiles in specific spots will be able to heat up a shower or basin on cold mornings.

Technology has changed the face of tile, as well. Using new advances in inkjet technology, tile manufacturers have created a tile that looks like wood. The wood has a contemporary facade, but is actually a purified colored-body porcelain.

If you are considering a tile project, start by perusing magazines and websites for ideas. But beware: once you see the possibilities of tile, every surface in your home will begin to look like an empty canvas. Designing and completing a tile project can be a perfect outlet for those creative urges.

If a DIY project is not your style, working with a designer can produce stunning results. Fasano agrees. "Tile can have such an amazing impact, and I have been so blessed to have worked on many homes in our Lake Geneva area," she said.

"Tile trends have changed over the last few years. Even though glass is still hot, we are seeing design lean towards a more simplistic feeling. We are doing more tile design using straight lines and jobs are a touch more on the contemporary side, which is a huge contrast to the European style that was so popular a few years ago. There is a large emphasis on geometric shapes, especially circles, and gray is definitely the new 'it' color."

She adds: "We are constantly looking for new and innovative ideas for tile applications. Recently, we did a beautiful tile job tiling the stair risers of a gorgeous home. We have been doing quite a bit of feature walls in tile, especially in powder rooms."

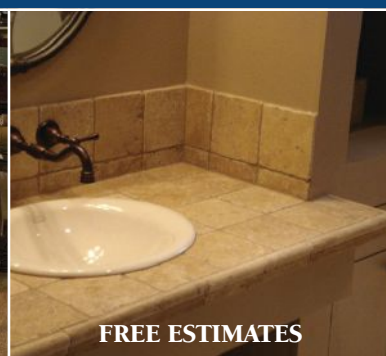
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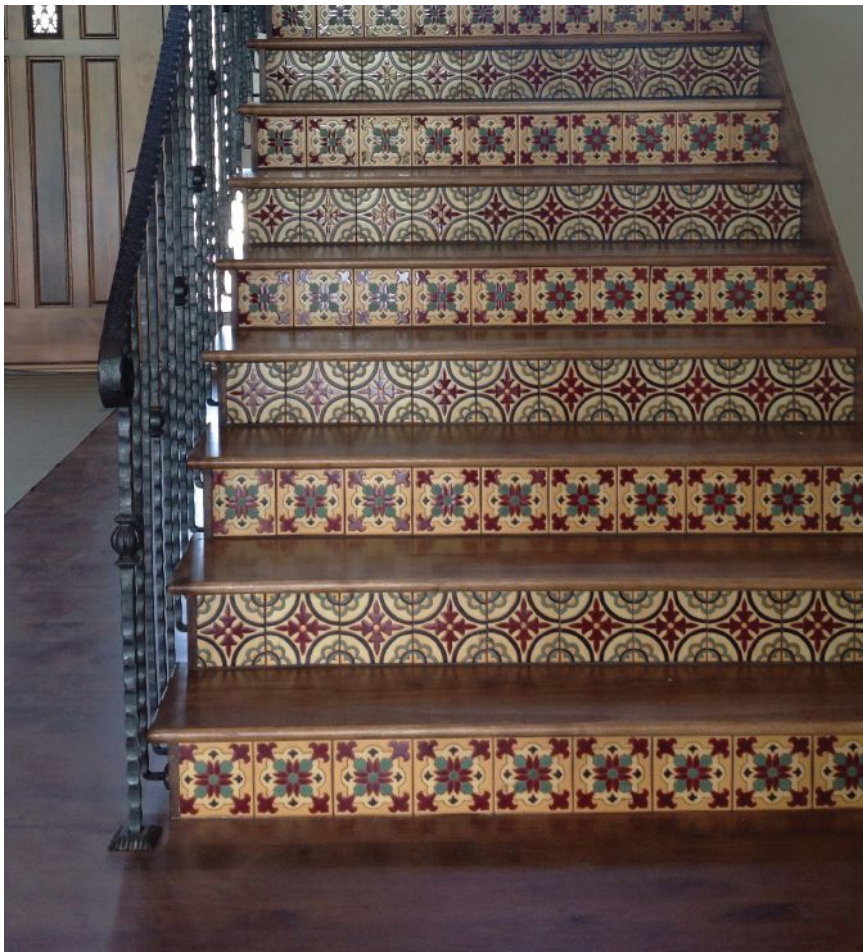
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"We have made several vanities out of tile and used tile as a 'rug' for under a free-standing tub. My personal favorite is tiling up the sides of the wall 12-18 inches, instead of the very typical 42-60 inches. To see tile at this unexpected height catches your attention and creates a very dramatic look."

Jessica Chase is the Project Manager/Interior Designer for Bella Tile and Stone. She often sees function as the impetus to create tile projects. "A place that is trending in tile that is pretty unique is a dog bed area. Typically the dog beds are in the laundry room with a doggy door and to make it just a little easier to clean, the clients tile up the walls behind the dog bed."

"Also, a fun way to change things up a little is to add a unique shape of tile to floors. Instead of a 12" x 12" or an 18" x 18" tile put a big octagon or arabesque shape on the floor to add more visual interest."

So if you're looking for a way to update your home with a pop of color, why not showcase your style with tile? 



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